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THE
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER
OF HEALTH
FOR THE
URBAN DISTRICT OF
NORTHAM
FOR THE YEAR
1953



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Annual Report, 1953

1.—STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

AREA—4.391 acres.

POPULATION—Estimated residents, 6,562.

Number of inhabited houses at end of 1953 according to the rate books, 2,404.

Rateable value, £41,820.

Sum represented by a penny rate, £172.

Social and Physical Conditions.

The District is divided into four wards for the purpose of election to the Urban Council. Appledore returning 5 members, Northam 4, Westward Ho! 4, and Orchard Hill 3.

Appledore has shipbuilding and repairing yards, which employ a large number of hands, and is a favourite sea fishing centre. Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill wards are chiefly residential, Westward Ho! being a popular seaside resort. Sand Yachts are in use on the sands at Westward Ho!

The well-known championship links of the Royal North Devon Golf Club are situated on Northam Burrows, and attract a large number of visitors during the year.

Under the name of Kipling Tors, a hillside overlooking Bideford Bay and situated in the south-western area of Westward Ho! has recently been purchased as part of a Kipling Memorial and handed over to the National Trust. This land is about 18 acres in extent, and is a welcome addition to the free beauties of the district.

2.—VITAL STATISTICS IN 1953.

Births and Birth Rate.

The total live births in the District was 78, of which 35 were boys and 43 girls.

There were 2 still births registered (1 boy, 1 girl).

The live birth rate per 1,000 of the population was 11.8, that for England and Wales being 15.5.

The still birth rate per 1,000 was 0.34, that for England and Wales being 0.35.

Deaths and Death Rate.

The total deaths were 82 (42 males and 40 females), 14 males and 12 females were over 80 years of age.

The death rate per 1,000 of the population was 12.4 that for England and Wales being 11.4.

There were 2 deaths of infants under 1 year; 25.7 per 1,000 live births.

That for England and Wales being 26.8 per 1,000 live births.

There was 1 death of an infant under 4 weeks of age.

The following Table gives the cause of death in the District during 1953 :

Causes						Male	Female
Hyperplasia of Prostate	...	...	...	...	...	2	—
Diabetes	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
Influenza	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
Acute Poliomyelitis	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
Malignant Neoplasm Lung	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
Malignant Neoplasm Breast	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
Other Malignant Neoplasms	...	...	...	...	...	5	7
Vascular Lesions of Nervous System	...	...	...	...	...	2	3
Coronary Disease	...	...	...	...	...	6	11
Hypertension with Heart Disease	...	...	...	...	...	1	3
Other Heart Disease	...	...	...	...	...	13	6
Other Circulatory Disease	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	...	3	—
Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
Other Diseases of Respiratory System	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
Ulcer of Stomach	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
Gastritis, Enteritis	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
Nephritis	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
Congenital Malformations	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
Other Defined and Ill Defined Diseases	...	...	...	...	...	5	6
Accidents	...	...	...	...	...	2	—
						42	40

There were no deaths from Measles, or other infectious diseases of children.

3.—GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.

(1)—Public Health Officers of the Authority.

There are two Public Health Officers of the Council—the Medical Officer of Health, the Sanitary Inspector, the duties of Water Inspector are in the hands of the Council's Surveyor.

(2)—Nursing Arrangements in Area.

The nursing arrangements are covered by two fully qualified Nurses who also act as Midwives. One is responsible for Appledore and Westward Ho! area, the other for Northam. Their work is of a high standard, and there is full co-operation with the General Practitioners of the district.

(3)—Hospitals

The District is provided for by the Bideford and District Hospital. The Hospital is available for Medical and Surgical cases and contains 51 beds, with specialist services available at clinics held in the Hospital.

The Isolation Hospital, situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, provides for infectious cases from the whole of North Devon, and was completed in 1935.

(4)—Ambulances.

The Ambulance Service is under the control of the National Health Service. An up-to-date Motor Ambulance is kept for Bideford and District for non-infectious cases and an Ambulance is kept at the Isolation Hospital for the use of cases using that Hospital.

(5)—Clinics and Treatment Centres.

A treatment centre for Venereal Disease and a Tuberculosis Dispensary are available at Barnstaple for Northam District. Tuberculous patients are admitted to Hawley and Hawkmoor Sanatoria. The treatment of Tuberculous patients is controlled by the Tuberculous officer at Barnstaple who conducts a comprehensive follow up scheme for all patients and contacts.

An orthopaedic clinic is now held at Bideford Hospital. There is now one Resident Children's Nursery in the district.

(6)—Ante-natal and Post-natal Care.

Ante-natal and post-natal clinics are conducted by each General Practitioner in the area in co-operation with the midwives. Specialist facilities are available at Barnstaple.

(7)—Blind Persons.

The number of registered blind persons in Northam U.D.C. is 15 : 10 in Appledore, 4 in Northam and 1 in Westward Ho! Cause of disability : Cataracts 5, Glaucoma 3, optic Atrophy 3, and other causes 4. There were no cases of Ophthalmia neonatorum notified during 1953.

4.—SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE AREA.

Northam Water Supply.

The Water supply is derived from a reservoir draining a large tract of moorland at Melbury, situated in Parkham parish and about nine miles from Northam. There is also augmentation of the water supply by pumping from the source of the Torridge at Kismeldon. A scheme to increase the capacity of the reservoir was completed in 1942, adding another 10 million gallons to the former storage capacity of about 40 millions. The average monthly use of water in 1953 was 9,308,000 gallons. As a result of improved water conservation there was no restriction in supply during periods of drought.

Rainfall for 1953.

Rainfall measurements are made at Melbury Waterworks (500 feet above sea-level) and at the Royal North Devon Golf Club (sea-level). The figures for 1953 were as follows : Melbury Waterworks 41.93 inches, Royal North Devon Golf Club 25.16 inches. The highest monthly rainfall at Melbury was 6.55 inches in July and at the Golf Club 4.82 inches in July. The lowest monthly rainfall at Melbury was 1.59 inches in January, and at the Golf Club 0.75 inches in January.

Comparable figures for 1952 were Melbury Waterworks 55.08 inches. Royal North Devon Golf Club 35.65 inches. The wettest months were August with 8.68 inches at Melbury Waterworks and 5.09 inches at the Royal North Devon Golf Club in August. The driest month was July with 1.41 inches at Melbury Waterworks and 1.09 inches at the Golf Course in July.

There is main drainage discharging at Rocks Nose, Westward Ho! which is covered at low water. The only river affected by sewage is tidal and is only used by a few houses in Appledore, which are too low to be connected with the main drainage. There is, however, a small stream polluted by sewerage water running through the south-west area of Northam District and draining a laundry and over a dozen residences. This stream is now, since

the alteration of boundaries, under the control of the Northam Council. Endeavour are still being made to remedy the nuisance by trenching, but sooner or later a piping scheme may have to be carried out if the present scheme is not satisfactory.

(a) During the year the Sanitary Inspector made numerous inspections of a sanitary nature. Complaints of nuisance were all remedied after serving of informal notices.

(b) There are four Elementary Schools in the District. All were inspected and found to be in a satisfactory condition.

5.—INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

Milk Supply.

There are 27 registered dairymen in the District, 25 producers and 2 retailers. Samples of milk were taken for examination and analysis.

Any samples which failed to pass the tests were reported on, and further samples in each case were passed as satisfactory.

Inspections of cowsheds were made, and any defective conditions remedied.

Bakehouses.

There are 6 Bakehouses in the District. All were inspected and found satisfactory.

Slaughterhouses.

All slaughtering is at present carried out at the Public Abbatoir in Bideford.

6.—HOUSING.

There were 13 new Council houses and bungalows completed in the district and 24 built by private enterprise.

Several houses were inspected under the Housing Acts or Public Health regulations. There was no action taken under statutory powers during the year. Disinfection of rooms was carried out where necessary.

7.—PREVENTION AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year there were 2 cases of Whooping Cough, 180 of Measles, 1 of Erysipelas, and 1 of Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis.

Since the institution of the National Health Service diphtheria immunisation is carried out by general practitioners and at the child welfare centres and school clinics.

The cleansing and disinfection of infected rooms is carried out by the Sanitary Inspector, and in cases where the bedding of necessitous cases has to be destroyed, the Council gives reasonable compensation.

No action was taken during the year under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations, or under Section 62 of the Public Health Act, 1935.



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